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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General urgently appeals to Croatian Government and Krajina Serbs to opt for negotiations instead of war; parties to meet in Geneva on Thursday.

* NATO says it is ready to use air power to defend all Bosnian safe areas from attack by any party; expresses concern at extremely dangerous situations in Croatia and Bosnia.

* UNCRO reports continued troop build-ups in Sectors North and South; Serb aircraft attack Croatian positions on Mount Dinara.

* UNHCR appeals to governments to provide resettlement or temporary protection for additional 5,000 victims of war in former Yugoslavia.

* FAO says outlook for world cereal supplies is tighter than previously projected, after lowering 1995 production forecast by 24 million tons.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today appealed urgently to the Croatian Government and the Krajina Serb leadership to stop and reflect about the choice which now faced them. He said reports indicated that war between them was imminent, and warned that it would cause terrible casualties and vast material damage.

The Secretary-General stressed that war was not inevitable and that only negotiation would settle the conflict. The outlines of a settlement had already been identified and the international community was ready to help the parties to reach agreement. He urged them to choose that path rather than war.

(more)

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In a related development, the Croatian parties today agreed to begin open-ended discussions in Geneva on Thursday. Each side will field delegations of four civilian and military representatives. At a meeting with Special Representative Yasushi Akashi on Sunday, the Croatian Serbs accepted a six-point plan under which they would disengage from fighting in Bosnia's Bihac pocket and allow humanitarian deliveries there. Mr. Akashi today said moves were underway towards the monitoring of Croatia's international border.

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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is ready to use air power to defend all of the Bosnian safe areas, NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes announced today. He said the North Atlantic Council had approved the necessary planning to deter attacks by any party on Bihac, Tuzla and Sarajevo. Last week, the Council decided that a Bosnian Serb attack on Gorazde would be met by a firm and decisive response.

Mr. Claes stressed that NATO's actions were in support of the United Nations, and were intended to assist the search for a political settlement. NATO would provide close air support to any United Nations personnel that came under attack in Bosnia and Croatia. He expressed grave concern at the extremely dangerous situations in both countries, which carried the risk of an even wider conflict. He urged all parties to exercise restraint and to desist from further military action.

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The United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) today reported continued troop build-ups around Sectors North and South, and said peace-keepers were being prevented from doing their job. Forces continued to mobilize in Sector East, with both sides moving artillery into the zone of separation. There were artillery exchanges between Croatian forces in Bosnia and Serbs across the border in Sector South. This morning, three Serb fixed-wing aircraft fired rockets at Croatian positions on Mount Dinara.

Meanwhile, over 14,000 Bosnian Serb civilians have been displaced by recent Croatian offensives in western Bosnia. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been organizing assistance for them out of Banja Luka. However, there has been a dramatic reduction in fighting in the Bihac pocket following the withdrawal of some Serb troops, although an estimated 1,000 remain in the area.

The Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith, met yesterday with Bosnian Serb Commander Ratko Mladic to discuss the general situation and humanitarian access to Sarajevo. Lieutenant-General Smith's helicopter was hit by small-arms fire while flying over Serb-held territory, but no one was hurt.

(more)

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The UNHCR has appealed to more than 30 governments to provide resettlement or temporary protection to an additional 5,000 victims of the war in the former Yugoslavia this year. It also asked them to prepare contingency plans for up to 50,000 more should an emergency arise.

The agency said the deteriorating security situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina underscored the need to "continuously adjust resettlement/temporary protection quotas and eligibility criteria". It expressed serious concern about possible future refugee movements arising from any escalation of hostilities involving Serb-held sectors of Croatia.

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The outlook for world cereal supplies is tighter than previously projected, according to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The FAO has revised its forecast for 1995 downward since May, mainly because of reduced forecasts for wheat and coarse grains output in the Untied States and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Total carryover stocks of cereals are now expected to fall to 262 million tons, the lowest level since 1981.

The FAO forecasts world cereal production in 1995 at 1,909 million tons, 24 million tons lower than the May forecast and 41 million tons lower than last year's harvest. The shortfall will not necessarily mean shortages in 1995/1996, but the margin of safety against a major crop failure next year is "sharply reduced". In addition to tight supplies and higher world market prices, the FAO expects food aid supplies to fall by over 20 per cent in 1995.

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